

THE MAIN CHARACTERISTICS OF GEORGIAN-LANGUAGE PRINTED PRODUCTS OF ISRAEL IN THE 70S

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It is widely known that Jews settled in Georgia over 26 centuries ago. Later, consequent to internal migrations and small or large waves of Jewish immigration to Georgia at different times, Jewish communities dispersed throughout the country. The Jewish diaspora shared common elements of culture and daily life with indigenous Georgian people for centuries of peaceful and friendly coexistence. However, Georgian Jewry has always been distinguished by its unique ethnic and cultural identity. Georgian was the language of their everyday communicative interaction from the very beginning. Hebrew, which lost most of its communicative value in Georgia, retained something of its symbolic value as a language of religious rites. Jews built compact settlements in different regions and were devout to Jewish traditions and religious/Biblical customs for centuries. Therefore, they were not assimilated with the local population.

The research on Georgian Jewry poses many questions and problems related to their life in Georgia as well as after their Aliyah to Israel. A linguistic study has demonstrated that Georgian, as spoken by Georgian Jews in Israel, is endangered since its use by the youth is steadily decreasing. Georgian literature produced in Israel is directly associated with the Georgian language, and consequently, it is endangered, too. Therefore, the significance of the study of literature and, in general, printed products written and produced by Georgian Jews in an endangered language in Israel can hardly be overestimated. In addition, in historical sources, very little evidence can be found about the life of the Jewish community in Georgia in earlier centuries. This adds value to the travelogues, memoirs, and notes describing Georgian Jewry and their culture. Due to this state of affairs, Georgian printed products issued/published in Israel (scholarly works, academic papers, fictional literature, periodicals, etc.) have gained even more importance.

The present paper explores and provides the thematic classification of Georgian prose fiction published in Israel in the 1970s. It focuses on the ideological, artistic value, and linguistic features of each individual work. Georgian Jewish authors, who have been using both written and spoken Georgian all their life, after changing their social milieu strive to integrate into new linguistic environment. Therefore, new elements emerged in their written language in the 1970s, which is characterized by excessive use of Hebraisms.

The printed products published in Israel in the 70s were not great in amount, and their themes and genres were not as diverse as those of the creations of the next period. Provided that the life of a Jew, regardless of where he/she resides, is regulated by religious customs and rites, one might expect an abundance of fictional works on religious themes, but, on the contrary, there are no religious works/writings among the printed products of the 1970s at all.

The printed products published in the 1970s are characterized by the following peculiarities:

Due to the hard social conditions, Georgian books were published in a very small amount in the 1970s. Just a few books were published, including books on political subjects (for example, a book about Baazov brothers (David and Gerzel) compiled and printed by Fani Baazov in Tel Aviv in 1976; a book by Nathan Eliashvili, one of the leaders of Georgian Jewry and a member of Zionist movement, titled "Georgian Jews in Georgia and in Israel"; Georgian translation of Jacob Zuri's "And the People Rose" published in Jerusalem in 1971). It should be noted that Georgian literature of Israel written the 1970s includes short stories on diverse topics. Jehuda Shalelashvili's short story collection "A Woman's Kiss," published in Tel Aviv in 1977, is particularly interesting in this regard

There were no Georgian publishing houses in Israel in the 1970s, and consequently, Georgian printed products were small in amount. Therefore, the editorial board of the newly established Georgian newspaper "Aliyah" (Editor Abraaham Sapir) undertook the responsibility of publishing novels, short stories and poetry in Georgian. The newspaper was a great achievement of Georgian Jewry. Its establishment was preceded by a complicated pre-history. However, the newspaper was supported by Georgian Jewry despite much controversy, resistance, and the financial crisis they had to face, and it did not cease to be published due to their unfailing efforts. Offering rubrics rich, diverse in topics, and broad in scope, it covered not only national but world news as well, but its literary section is especially worthy of note. Unlike all other publishing bodies in Israel, "Aliyah" covered a wide range of writings by Georgian Jewish authors. Unknown authors appeared on the pages of the newspaper, gradually improving their writing skills and paving their way to literary fame. They embrace diverse subjects such as patriotism, love, inhuman brutalities and cruelties of the Auschwitz concentration camp in Oświęcim, the severity of tortures and persecutions of the infamous Spanish Inquisition, etc. In their writings, fiction is mixed with real, allegorical, and humorous narratives followed by realistic and historical stories, etc. Some stories show much affection for Jewish soldiers, others describe patriotic devotion to Israel, and still others express longing for Georgia. One can also find lighter, amusing stories with primitive plots and fairy-tale happy ends.

Most importantly, regardless of their thematic or ideological implications and excessive use of Hebraisms, all of them, all Georgian books, stories, and sketches, even if they are focused on daily life in Israel (for instance, life in Israeli "kibbutzs"), are mostly written in Georgian and retain main characteristics of Georgian literature. It should also be noted that the number of Georgian Jewish writers has increased in Israel. Having preserved Georgian spirituality and traditional values, they had to counterbalance controversial feelings (nostalgia vs patriotism) and cultural shock (temporary disappointment in the alien environment, longing for Georgia, sorrow, etc.) with creative activities and loss with intellectual gain.

To conclude, the study of the printed products published by Georgian Jewish authors in Israel in the 1970s demonstrates that, on the one hand, it is an inseparable part of the entire body of Georgian literature and follows its traditions, and on the other, is slightly influenced by Jewish thought and Israeli milieu.